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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5404
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0628
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 4854
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0005

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000654

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CCA
DEPT PLEASE PASS TO WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2018

TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CU GT

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: REVIEW OF CUBA FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE
III OF LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 52541

Classified By: Ambassador James Derham for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Post's response to reftel regarding the relationship between the Cuban and Guatemalan governments is provided below.

-- The GOG has not actively promoted the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba, and has not officially supported activities connected with the May 21 Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People. Local civil society has advocated for the advancement of human rights in Cuba.

-- Post is not aware of any public statements or governmental actions undertaken by the GOG condemning human rights abuses in Cuba, or supporting democracy or civil society in Cuba.

-- Guatemalan Vice President Espada visited Cuba February 1-3, 2008, shortly after he assumed office. Espada met with Cuban Vice President Carlos Lange, Minister of Health Jose Ramon Balanguer, and other senior officials. The purpose of the visit was for Espada, a former heart surgeon with a strong interest in public health policy, to explore the possibility of Cuban doctors providing medical training to a hospital in rural Guatemala.

-- Post is not aware of any Guatemalan business investments in Cuba.

-- There is one bilateral trade agreement between Guatemala and Cuba called a "partial scope agreement." The partial scope agreement provides preferential tariffs for some mutually agreed-upon goods and eliminates non-tariff barriers to facilitate and expand trade flows.

-- Scholarships are available for Guatemalans to study in Cuba, particularly to study medicine. There have been questions raised as to whether Cuban medical training meets Guatemalan requirements to practice medicine. As of January 2008, there were 282 Cuban medical doctors in Guatemala working in 13 of the country's 43 hospitals, some of whom are in Guatemala as part of a professional exchange program. In April, the GOG signed an agreement with the Cuban government to implement Cuban literacy methodology "Yo Si Puedo" (Yes I Can) in Guatemala's public educational system. The literacy method will be implemented nationwide with the support of Cuban teachers, in the 45 poorest municipalities. The program is scheduled to start in July.

Derham